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ABSTRACT

A student suicide or parasuicide increases the risk that potentially suicidal teenagers see suicide as an enviable option. The "copycat effect" can be reduced by a postvention program. This proposed evaluative research project will provide an implementation and impact evaluation of a school's postvention program following a suicide or parasuicide. The implementation evaluation consists of a post-test of the experimental group only. The impact evaluation uses a pre-test/post-test quasi-experimental design with a nonequivalent control group. For the implementation evaluation, the independent variables for program characteristics are relative advantage, compatibility, complexity, triability, and observability. The independent variables for team characteristics are credibility, adaptability, availability, attention, affability, and usefulness. The dependent variable is the implementation level. For the impact evaluation, the independent variable is the program, and the dependent variables are knowledge, attitudes, and ability of the participants. All data will be collected by self-completed questionnaires and analyzed with the chi-square distribution. This project will contribute to the development of an effective implementation strategy of a postvention program and will provide the occasion to improve the postvention program in the high schools of the Saguenay-Lac-St-Jean region in Quebec, Canada. If the conclusions are positive, the Centre de Prevention du Suicide 02 will offer the opportunity to all high schools in the region to implement the postvention program. (LLL)

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EVALUATION PROJECT OF A POSTVENTION PROGRAM

AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF SUICIDOLOGY

25th ANNUAL CONFERENCE

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This poster session will focus on the methodology of a double evaluation strategy of the implementation and the impact of a school's postvention program. We will try to show how useful an evaluation project can be when planned simultaneously with the implementation of the program.

This program will be implemented and evaluated in a specific region of the province of Québec, the Saguenay-Lac-St-Jean, by the local suicide prevention center, the Centre de Prévention du Suicide 02, in collaboration with the community health department.

Statement of the Problem:

The teenage (15-19) suicidal rate in our region (19.0 deaths/100,000) for the period between 1985-89 is significantly higher than the provincial rate (15.2 deaths/100,000) which is one of the highest in North America. For this age group, suicide is the second leading cause of death, following motor vehicule accidents. With regards to suicidal prevalence, 7.2% of teenage students in the Saguenay-Lac-St-Jean region have attempted suicide and 12.3% have seriously thought about it (Simon, 1991).

Review of the Literature:

A student suicide or parasuicide increases the risk that potentially suicidal teenagers see suicide as an enviable option (Davidson, 1989). Many authors (Boyd and Webb, 1986; Roussanville and Weissman, 1980: see Carter and Brooks, 1990; Davidson, 1989;

Vidal, 1986) point out the contagion or epidemic risk following the suicide of a schoolmate.

The "copycat effect" can be reduced by a postvention program (Lamb and Dune-Maxim, 1987). Talking about the event in an emotionally safe milieu such as the school can reduce the trauma and the potential negative effects (Carter and Brooks, 1990).

For the last twenty years, some postvention programs have been implemented in the U.S.A. and in English Canada but none in French-speaking Québec. Existing research literature contains no evaluation study of these programs.

Purpose:

The purpose of this evaluative research project is to achieve an implementation and impact evaluation of a school's postvention program following a suicide or a parasuicide.

Hypothesis:

In this evaluative study the two following hypothesis will be tested. The first, regarding the implementation evaluation, is: "Characteristics of the program and characteristics of the implementation team (independent variables) can influence the institution's adhesion to the postvention program (dependent variable)". The second hypothesis, regarding the impact evaluation, is: "The postvention program (independent variable) will increase the school professionals' knowledge, attitudes and ability (dependent variables)".

Methodology:

Research Design:

The implementation evaluation will consist of a post-test of the experimental group only.

The impact evaluation will use a pre-test/post-test quasi-experimental design with a nonequivalent control group.

Definition of the Implementation Evaluation Variables:

The independent variables, program characteristics (Rogers and Shoemaker, 1971: see Rochon, 1988), are: **relative advantage** (the program presents an improvement over the past situation); **compatibility** (the program is compatible with participants' values); **complexity** (the program is easy to understand and use); **triability** (the participants feel free to join the program) and **observability** (the participants can follow the evolution of the program).

The independent variables, team characteristics (Rochon, 1988), are: **credibility** (the team seems credible to the participants); **adaptability** (the team facilitates and allows program adaptation); **availability** (the team is available to the participants); **attention** (the team listens to the participants and takes into consideration what happens within the program and in the school); **affability** (the team is affable and kind) and **usefulness** (the team is useful to the participants).

The dependent variable is the **implementation level**. Charters and Jones (1973: see Rochon, 1988) have distinguished four levels

of implementation: institutional commitment, structural alteration, role and task adaptations, and participation in training activities.

Definition of the Impact Evaluation Variables:

The independent variable is **the program**, the school's postvention program following a suicide or a parasuicide.

The dependent variables are **knowledge**, **attitudes** and **ability** of the participants in the school's postvention training program.

Methods of Data Collection and Analysis:

All data will be collected by self-completed questionnaires and analysed with the chi-square distribution.

Impact of the Study:

This evaluative study will contribute to the development of an effective implementation strategy of a postvention program in the high schools of Saguenay-Lac-St-Jean region. The study will also provide the occasion to improve the postvention program.

If the conclusions of this evaluative study are positive, the Centre de Prévention du Suicide 02 will offer the opportunity to all high schools in the region to implement the postvention program. We hope that the new knowledge, attitudes and ability the participants will develop will help reduce the contagion risk following a suicide or a parasuicide.

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